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Other Issues Besides the War

Washington—Both Sen. Eugene McCarthy and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy at one time had doubts about challenging Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic presidential nomination because the President was in a position to eliminate the peace issue whenever he saw fit.

After McCarthy took the plunge, however, he gradually discovered there was plenty to talk about besides Vietnam. He also found much of the opposition to Johnson was personal and independent of the war policy. After McCarthy's success in the New Hampshire primary, it was obvious that a peace move on the part of the President would no longer make it impossible for other Democrats to sustain a campaign against him for the nomination. So two things happened: Kennedy came in and Johnson went out.



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There seems little doubt that even before New Hampshire the President was thinking of retiring, but also there is little doubt that McCarthy and Kennedy would still be in the race today even if Johnson's bombing cutback had not been accompanied by his retirement statement. By the time the President made his historic announcement, his rivals had already begun to broaden the scope of their challenge well beyond just the war issue, and in recent days this tendency has become still more marked.

Some historians will surely surmise that Johnson would have had a clear field for re-nomination if he had made his peace move before McCarthy took the plunge against him. Also, it is quite possible that, before New Hampshire, McCarthy might have withdrawn if the President had defused the war issue.

All that is water over the dam now. McCarthy is, in fact, beginning to question the seriousness of the Johnson peace bid. He notes the quibbling over a negotiating site, the continued bombing of North Vietnam on a

heavy scale, and the launching of the biggest U.S. ground offensives of the year.

Aside from the war, however, both he and Kennedy have been pressing against other exposed nerves. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for instance, has focused fresh attention on the President's coolness to the recommendations of his own commission on civil disorders, and his earlier brushoff of similar proposals after last year's riots.

McCarthy seems to have hit political paydirt with his pledge (if elected) to put a tight rein on the "CIA, FBI, and the draft boards under General Hershey." The cheers this generated indicates how the country has changed since 1960. After John F. Kennedy's election, his first major appointments were the renaming of J. Edgar Hoover as director of the FBI and Allen Dulles as head of the CIA. He came to regret this, and following the CIA's Bay of Pigs disaster, he removed Dulles.

Robert Kennedy is no more enchanted with the FBI and CIA than McCarthy is. He is one of the few attorneys general who has not quailed before Hoover. If he becomes President it is not likely he would entrust civil rights investigations to a director who referred to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as "the most notorious liar in the country." The Bay of Pigs disillusioned Sen. Kennedy with the CIA as much as it did his older brother, so it, too, is in for control if either the Minnesotan or New Yorker is elected.

Actually, in a quiet way, the CIA has already been considerably tamed. In a forthcoming book on "People and Power in Political Washington," Stewart Alsop gives an inside account of how the spy organization has lost some of its old derring-do.

His absorbing report concludes that the clique of "Bold Easterners" who planned and executed so many of the agency's most melodramatic operations has gradually been displaced by less adventurous spirits. He rather regretfully calls it the "triumph of the prudent professionals." Anyhow, the CIA has not overthrown any foreign governments for some time now. So far as we know, that is.